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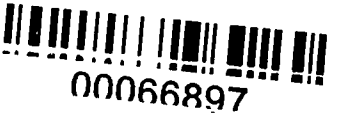

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Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 11 March, 2020

Recognition in Eternity.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES,

IN

SANDRINGHAM CHURCH,

ON

SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 24th, 1892.

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BY

REV. JAMES FLEMING, B.D.,

CHAPLAIN-IN-ORDINARY TO THE QUEEN; VICAR OF S. MICHAEL'S, CHESTER SQUARE; PRECENTOR OF YORK MINSTER; RESIDENTIARY CANON OF YORK, AND HON. CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER, K.G.

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Printed by command

OF

THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES.

EIGHTH EDITION.

A-d-67

All profits arising from the sale of this Sermon will, by desire of HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS OF WALES, be divided between THE GORDON BOYS' HOME and THE BRITISH HOME FOR INCURABLES, CLAPHAM RISE.

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[THE DESIGN OF THE CROSS AND WORDS BENEATH IT WERE SUGGESTED TO THE MIND OF THE PREACHER BY THE FOLLOWING TOUCHING STORY TOLD TO HIM BY HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS OF WALES, AND INSERTED HERE BY HER PERMISSION.]

"In 1888 all my five children received the Holy Communion with me, and I gave Eddy a little book, and wrote in it—

"'NOTHING IN MY HAND I BRING,
SIMPLY TO THY CROSS I CLING;'

and also

"'JUST AS I AM, WITHOUT ONE PLEA,
BUT THAT THY BLOOD WAS SHED FOR ME,
O LAMB OF GOD, I COME.'

"When he was gone, and lay like one sleeping, we laid a Cross of flowers on his breast, and after we had done so, I turned to the table at his bedside and saw the little book in which were written those words; and I could not help feeling that he did cling to the Cross, and that it had all come true."

SERMON.

2 SAMUEL XII. 23 *(part)*.

"I SHALL GO TO HIM."

WE miss half the force of Holy Scripture when we fail to realise the circumstances of the speakers, and omit to place ourselves in the exact position in which they stood at the time. The same words which, under one condition shall seem comparatively unimpressive, shall, under another, be full of tender meaning. For instance, no thoughtful reader of the Bible can fail to admire the prayer of the dying penitent on the Cross.

But the strength of his faith becomes much more impressive if we remember that *he* called Jesus Lord, at the very moment when the whole Jewish nation rejected Him; that *he* acknowledged the Messiahship of Christ, at the very moment when the chief priests and rulers and people denied it; and that *he* committed the interests of his immortal soul into the hands of Christ, at the very moment when our Lord seemed to be abandoned of God and deserted by man.

Again, in that wonderful chapter in Daniel we are always struck with the noble reply of the three Hebrew youths—"We are not careful to answer thee in this matter, O king. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee that we will not serve thy gods,

nor worship the image which thou hast set up." Nevertheless, it is infinitely more noble if we recollect that the burning fiery furnace was immediately in view, and the attendants ready to fling them into it.

So here, it seems easy to utter with the lips these five monosyllables, "I shall go to him." But the text has double, treble weight when we recall the scene of that hushed home. David was a king—yes, but he was also a man and a brother. He can neither eat nor sleep. Sickness has crept over the velveted carpet, and Death is bending over the pillow of a dying son. Seven days pass, seven days of hopes and fears. Then—the eyes are closed and the hands are folded. Those around are consulting in the room; they are whispering together, and David, with a kind of instinct of grief, asks, "Is he dead?" "Yes."

"Then he arose and changed his apparel, and sat down to eat bread." What was it that lifted up this sorrow-laden heart? What was it that wrought such a change in this royal mourner? Was it not the thought that he shall again clasp this lost son: that he shall find once more his lost treasure. No dark grave could hide this thought from his heart. He wipes his tears and says—"I shall go to him." What a change! what a triumph!

Ah! it is easy enough in the time of prosperity to say, "Thy will be done." Easy, when the cup runneth over, to say, "I will put my trust in God." Easy, while the sword still lies sleeping in the scabbard, to say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." But to say this when the thunder is rolling across *our* sky—to say this when the pitiless storm is desolating *our* home—to say this when the glittering sword is bare, and

its point is quivering at *our* heart—here is the "patience and faith of saints."

But—SHALL WE KNOW EACH OTHER IN ANOTHER WORLD? Intense question! It throbs at every heart here. So many friends in their time of sorrow have written me this question—"Shall we know each other in another world?" Parted lives that long for re-union. Breaking hearts that sigh for comfort, "Shall we know each other in another world?" "It would be so delightful," (they say,) "if it were true."

But I am here to-day to tell you that it *is* true. God has lifted the question out of the region of surmise into positive certainty. "SHALL WE KNOW EACH OTHER IN ANOTHER WORLD?" Yes, the inspired word says, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." FACE TO FACE! What is this but recognition?" When the tangled

tapestry of life is finished and turned, we shall see "face to face." Dear ones with whom we walked hand in hand along the path of life. Eyes that once looked on us so tenderly, closed in their long sleep. Ears that drank in the words of love, deaf till they open at the sound of the trump of God. Voices that made the music of our Homes,—h-u-s-h-e-d till the resurrection morning. All these are there, "not lost, but gone before." Can we bring them back again? We shall go to them, but they shall not return to us. If the Son of David had returned, he would have recognized him, but instead of this, he is going to his son, and he is comforted with the assurance of the same recognition. Where would be the Consolations of religion, if Death were final extinction of the recognition each of the other?

The dying penitent makes the fact of his recognition the very burden of his prayer. "Lord, remember *me*." "Amid the thousands of the saved, do not forget *me*. Amid the multitudes of the redeemed, do not overlook *me!*" "Lord, remember *me*." Had there been any error, our Lord would have corrected it, at so critical a moment. On the contrary, He sanctioned it in the tender answer—"To-day shalt *thou* be with *Me* in Paradise." What is this but recognition in Eternity?

And we, too, take to our hearts the same comfort in our hour of dark sorrow. We ask the same question, "Shall we know each other in another world?" And we cling to the same hope and assurance, "I shall go to him."

So would we, if we may—bring to stricken hearts this morning this glorious consolation of future recognition. Let it comfort them.

Let it light up their loneliness. Let it fill once more the empty chair. Let it people once more the empty home.

We would not, for all the world, open afresh bleeding hearts that have not yet begun to heal. But we would—if we could—carry into them messages of tenderest sympathy. We would—if we could—bring to their side the strength of Divine comfort. We would—if we could—remind them that their separation from their gentle Prince-boy is but temporary, their re-union with him shall be eternal before the throne of God. We would say to them in the exquisite words of Longfellow :—*

"The air is full of farewells to the dying,
And mournings for the dead:
The heart of Rachel for her children crying,
Will not be comforted.

*"*Resignation*" (*Poems by the Fireside*).

And tho', at times impetuous with emotion,
And anguish long suppressed,—
The swelling heart heaves, moaning like the Ocean,
That cannot be at rest:

We *will* be patient—and assuage the feeling
We cannot wholly stay:
By silence sanctifying—not concealing
The grief that *must* have way.

There is no Death! what seems so is transition;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian,
Whose portal we *call*—Death!"

And now, what view shall we who are spared a little longer take of life? Shall it be dark and gloomy, because it is pitched in every key of distress—the same undertone of sorrow coming from human hearts all the world over? From this experience none are exempted. Sorrow enters every Home. In that supreme hour we all need

some comfort. Where shall we find it?

Suppose a friend tells my troubled heart, "All this is inevitable,"—there is no comfort in that. Or, if he tell me, "This happens to you, because it happens to others,"—there is no comfort in that. Or, if he tell me, "It is beneath the dignity of your nature to give way to it,"—there is no comfort in that. Or, if he tell me, "The truest philosophy is to submit to what you must bear,"—there is no comfort in that. In his attempt to comfort me, he mocks me.

I turn from all such comforters to an open Bible. Here I read, "Whom I love I chasten." Oh! tell me, in that bitter hour of ONE Who, in that He Himself suffered, being tried, is able to succour me when I am sorely tried. Tell me of His prevailing advocacy at the right hand of God. Tell me

of vanquished death and a blessed resurrection unto everlasting life. Tell me that beyond the chastening Cross I may see the glorious Crown. Then—though the hand tremble, and the lip quiver, and the heart almost stand still—I can say, "The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Then though the tongue falter, I can sing,—

> "Trial—God's Alchemist of old
> Shall purge away the dross and mould,
> And leave us rich in gems and gold."

Sorrow has some great mission for us when, for the first time, it enters and breaks the magic circle of a happy home. Its mission is not to break our hearts, but to soften them. "God" (says Job) "maketh the heart soft." Its mission is not to drive us away from God, but to bring us nearer than we have ever been to Him.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee:
E'en tho' it be a Cross
That lifteth me:
Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

It is said that when skilled gardeners would bring a very choice plant to richest flowering, they deprive it of light and moisture. It is placed in the dark. Silent and lonely it stands, dropping one faded leaf after another, seeming to go patiently down to death. But when every leaf is dropped, and the plant stands stripped, a new life is working in the bud that lies under every falling leaf, from which shall spring forth a richer foliage, and a brighter wealth of flowers. So the Heavenly Gardener puts His choicest plants into the dark, where the youngest leaf must drop, but it is gently done in order that a

new and divine life may visit the heart and enrich the soul.

We who are gathered around you this morning—and we but represent thousands of affectionate, warm, and loyal hearts—think not of ourselves to-day; not of all we have lost,—not of all the throne has lost,—not of all the Nation has lost, (a Nation in mourning has told your hearts that story), not of all that his many friends have lost in the gentle young spirit that has been called away by God. We think only of *you*. Of *your* darkened home,—of *your* bleeding hearts,—of *your* bowed spirits. May God—the God of all comfort—in time send you His healing. Meanwhile, He will help you, as you desire from your heart to say "Thy will be done."

And for *him*, whose quenchless memory you will carry with you, in the casket of your hearts, till you shall meet him again—It is

the young soldier whose warfare is accomplished; it is the young racer who has reached the goal; it is the young heir who has entered into his promised inheritance; it is the youngest King who is gone up to his Coronation!

"Oh! then, what raptured greetings
On Canaan's happy shore;
What knitting severed friendships up,
Where partings are no more.
'Tis finished! All is finished!
His fight with Death and Sin:
Fling open wide the golden gates,
And let the VICTOR—in!"

DEAN ALFORD.

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